

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 013436
ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011

DRAFTED BY:IO:UNA:BJSHARP

APPROVED BY:IO:UNA:JFTEFFT

S/S-O:MVKENNEDY

-----041008 181611Z /44

R 181041Z JAN 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 013436

EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM TEL AIV DATED JANURAY 16, 1978
SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO CAIRO IS REPEATED TO YOU:
QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L 0727

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, IS, EG, XF

SUBJECT: DMC FACTION AT POINT OF DIVISION: RUBINSTEIN SEEKS
EMBASSY COUNSEL

REF: TEL AVIV 666

1. AMNON RUBINSTEIN, LEADER OF THE SHINUI FACTION
WITHIN THE DMC, CALLED ON DCM AT THE EMBASSY EVENING
OF JANUARY 15 AFTER ASKING FOR AN URGENT APPOINTMENT
TO DISCUSS A CRUCIAL DECISION THAT HE AND HIS SHINUI
COLLEAGUES HAD TO MAKE. CONVERSATION THAT ENSUED SHOULD
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OBTAINING BE TREATED AS HIGHLY SENSITIVE.

2. RUBINSTEIN BEGAN THE MEETING BY DISCLOSING THAT
HE AND FOUR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SHINUI GROUP WERE IN
THE PROCESS OF DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO LEAVE THE
DMC IMMEDIATELY. THEY CONSIDERED THE ROLE PLAYED BY
THE DMC LEADERSHIP, DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF NEW

ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI BY THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE, TO BE THE LAST STRAW AS FAR AS THEY ARE CONCERNED. RUBINSTEIN RECALLED THAT ONE VOTE IN THE COMMITTEE HAD GONE AGAINST HIS POSITION BY 12 TO 10, WITH ONE DMC MEMBER ABSTAINING AND ANOTHER ACTUALLY VOTING AGAINST.

3. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE WAS THE ONE POINT ON WHICH THE DMC WAS ABLE TO EXTRACT ANY CONCESSION FROM THE GOVERNMENT BEFORE JOINING THE COALITION, AND THAT FOR THE DMC LEADERSHIP TO HAVE SQUANDERED THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ITS INFLUENCE FELT ON THIS SUBJECT WAS HUMILIATING. THE EXPERIENCE HAS BROUGHT HIMSELF AND THE FOUR OTHERS TO THE POINT OF DECISION.

4. RUBINSTEIN STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT THE LAST THING HE WANTS TO DO IS ENDANGER THE PEACE PROCESS. BY HIS ESTIMATION, IF HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES DEFECT FROM THE PARTY NOW IT WOULD INVOLVE THE LOSS OF ONE DMC PORTFOLIO AND COULD PROVOKE A GOVERNMENT CRISIS--PROBABLY THIS WEEK. HE HAD COME TO THE EMBASSY, THEREFORE, TO SEEK SOME "FRIENDLY AND UNOFFICIAL" ADVICE AS TO WHETHER THE NEXT TWO WEEKS WERE VIEWED AS CRITICAL TO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

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5. DCM EMPHASIZED HIS DISCOMFORT AS A US GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL DISCUSSING WITH A MEMBER OF KNESSET ACTIONS HE MIGHT TAKE IN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ARENA. DCM THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO EVALUATE BEFORE THE JERUSALEM TALKS EVEN BEGIN WHETHER A GIVEN TIME SEGMENT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS "CRITICAL." OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, THE SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD NOT BE PLANNING TO COME IF HE DID NOT CONSIDER THOSE TALKS TO BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. DCM ADDED, SPEAKING AS AN OBSERVER ON THE SCENE, THAT HE FOUND IT HARD TO IMAGINE ANY GOVERNMENT WANTING TO CONFRONT AN INTERNAL CRISIS AT A PERIOD SUCH AS THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL FINDS ITSELF IN NOW. IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT ANYONE WOULD BE SHOULDERING A VERY HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY IF HE WERE TO SHAKE THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT AT THIS POINT.

6. DCM CLOSED BY SUGGESTING, COMPLETELY OFF-THE-RECORD AND PERSONALLY, THAT RUBINSTEIN WAIT A WEEK OR TEN DAYS TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS IN THE JERUSALEM TALKS. HE POINTED OUT THAT SANITY HAD EVENTUALLY PREVAILED DURING THE COURSE OF THE WEEKEND AND THAT ONE SHOULD BE OPTIMISTIC THAT IT WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO AS EVENTS UNFOLD.

7. THIS MORNING'S PRESS CNFIRMS THAT DMC DISSENTERS ARE EXPECTED TO DECIDE TODAY, JANUARY 16, WHETHER TO SPLIT AND FOR A SEPARATE KNESSET FACTION. ALTHOUGH RUBINSTEN MENTIONED FIVE AS THE NUMBER IN HIS GROUP, JERUSALEM POST MENTIONS ONLY HIM, TOLEDANO, WERTHEIMER AND WIRSHUBSKY. FIFTH, IF AVAILABLE, WOULD BE EITHER ATASHI OR ALGERBELI.

8. COMMENT: RUBINSTEIN'S ACTION IN SEEKING ADVICE ON SUCH A MATTER FROM A FOREIGN EMBASSY IS REFLECTIVE OF THE LEVEL OF HIS CURRENT FRUSTRATION WITH THE DMC LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS PERHAPS INDICATING A CERTAIN POLITICAL NAIVETE, CHARMING AND FLATTERING AS IT MAY
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LEWIS UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAND SETTLEMENT, PARTY MEETINGS, PEACE TALKS, MILITARY OCCUPIED AREAS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE013436
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: IO:UNA:BJSHARP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780027-0110
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780149/aaaabpfw.tel
Line Count: 138
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e5fb3be2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 TEL AVIV 666
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3753313
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DMC FACTION AT POINT OF DIVISION: RUBINSTEIN SEEKS EMBASSY COUNSEL
TAGS: PGOV, MOPS, PBOR, IS, EG, XF
To: USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e5fb3be2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014